

# Chapter I - Public Participation

## A. Overview:

The California Government Code expressly requires that diligent efforts be made to engage the public in the process of preparing and adopting Housing Elements. As part of drafting this updated document, a series of public meetings and public hearings were conducted with City staff, the Planning Commission and the City Council regarding the 2009 Housing Element. These sessions were indicated in the Public Involvement Meeting Schedule presented in Appendix I-1. Throughout the process, notices for all meetings was mailed to the people on the Master Contact List for the Housing Element Update (see Appendix I-2) and posted on the City's web site, <http://www.ci.santa-maria.ca.us>, in order to inform people that the City will be updating the Housing Element and advising them of the upcoming meeting dates. This updated Housing Element has been drafted in consideration of this early outreach, along with direction furnished by the Planning Commission and City Council.

## B. Public Meetings:

Public Workshops have been conducted by the Community Development Department on August 20, 2009, and October 21, 2009, to further solicit public comments. Following is a summary of each meeting.

- 1. Public Meeting #1:** On August 20, 2009, Community Development staff hosted a public meeting at Santa Maria City Hall to provide an understanding of the Housing Element Update Process including State Deadlines, an understanding of the structure of the Housing Element document, and to invite and encourage public comments on the present (2006) Housing Element. At this meeting, the topic of the availability of water for any future housing units was raised. Staff noted that the available land inventory included land already zoned for development, and adequate infrastructure capacity had already been established for the vacant land within the City's boundaries. Other topics discussed at the meeting included affordable farmworker rental housing, opportunities for home ownership for persons in the lower income levels, and the current supply of vacant homes.
- 2. Public Meeting #2:** The second public meeting was held on October 21, 2009, at the Santa Maria City Hall as part of the Planning Commission's regular meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to present the Preliminary Draft Housing Element, discuss the incorporation of public comments into Draft Housing Element Programs, and to invite public input into the Negative Declaration. Topics discussed included the status of certain approved development projects such as Mahoney Ranch, and public vs. private infrastructure improvements.

### **C. Planning Commission Meetings:**

- 1. Study Sessions:** The City Planning Commission was briefed regarding this Housing Element update at a study session on August 6, 2009, during which the entire process was explained, from development of the Regional housing Needs Assessment, through HCD Certification. Another study session was held on October 22, 2009, at which the Community Development staff explained the structure and content of the Preliminary Draft Housing Element.
- 2. Public Hearing:** The Planning Commission considered a draft Negative Declaration (determination of no significant environmental impacts) with the Draft Housing Element in a public hearing on November 4, 2009. The Planning Commission made recommendations to the City Council to: certify the Negative Declaration; and direct Staff to send the Draft Housing Element to the State Department of Housing and Community Development for their review and approval.

### **D. City Council Hearings:**

- 1. First Public Hearing:** On December 1, 2009, the City Council considered the recommendations of the Planning Commission and directed Staff to send the Draft Housing Element to the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) for review. In accordance with Section 65585(b) of the Government Code, HCD has 60 days to comment on the compliance of the City's Draft Housing Element with the requirements of State Housing Element law.
- 2. Second Public Hearing:** On March 16, 2010, the City Council met to consider the written comments of HCD, as well as staff recommended changes to the Draft Housing Element. At this hearing, the City Council adopted the updated Housing Element, and directed staff to submit a copy of the adopted Element to HCD, in accordance with Section 65585(g) of the Government Code.

### **E. Ongoing Public Participation:**

Many of the affordable housing programs presented in this Housing Element involve significant public participation, most notably through the City's Block Grant Advisory Committee.

**References Cited in this Chapter:** None

### **Appendices to this Chapter:**

Appendix I-1 Public Involvement Meeting Schedule

Appendix I-2 Master Contact List - Housing Element Update